Living in an Unseen Future

Romans 8:18–30

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As Christians, we live with an awareness that something sets us apart from others. Yet, in many cases, we are not entirely sure what that difference really is.

We are saved. We have been invited into the kingdom of God. The Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, dwells within us. We are under God’s protection. If we were to list all the differences, there would be no end.

At the same time, it is also true that our daily lives are hardly different from anyone else’s. We eat the same meals, sip the same miso soup, enjoy the same sushi, and sit in the same traffic jams. We complain about the same heat and cold, are battered or blessed by the same typhoons.

I. Our Present Life

According to the Bible, our present condition is that we groan under futility, just like everyone else. That is reality. Yet Christian suffering is always accompanied by hope. First, we know that Christ, who endured the same sufferings, is with us, cheering us on. Furthermore, the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, dwells within us, empowering us from within, sharing in our pain, struggling alongside us, and enabling us to overcome.

We are never alone. Our Savior, who knows and understands everything about us, is always with us. At any time and in any place, we can speak and cry out to Him. Even when it seems as though we are tossed helplessly on the storms of this world, in truth the Holy Spirit is with us, fighting beside us.

II. Our Future Life

We are not engaged in an endless battle. Our struggles will one day come to an end—and that end will be our overwhelming victory. Christ has already won it for us through His death and resurrection.

Even now, we live by the power of that resurrection, as those raised from the dead. This is our spiritual, unseen reality. Yet in the visible, everyday world, that reality has not yet been fully realized. That gap between the spiritual and the visible brings us pain and suffering.

But this dual existence will not last forever. When we depart this world and our bodies return to the dust, a time of resurrection awaits us. Christ Himself will come to meet us, raise us, give us new bodies, and conform us to His likeness.

The Bible does not reveal much about what life will be like when we leave this world for the next. What is clear is that we will be freed from the sufferings of this life. But until we are clothed with new, resurrected bodies, complete human life is not yet possible, for a full human being possesses both a heart renewed in God's image and a body to dwell in. Our perfection will come only when Christ returns, raises us, and clothes us with new bodies.

So we live in hope, enduring the pain of this present world. Hope is our strength.

III. A People of Hope

Hope is the light of life. With hope, we can endure even the hardest circumstances. Yet many Christians live as though they had no hope. It is vital that we understand clearly the hope we have and never lose sight of it.

When a windshield fogs over, it is like driving into a dense mist—you cannot see the road ahead. In the same way, hope can grow faint and blurry, leaving us anxious about the future. To clear a windshield, we use wipers for the outside, or briefly turn on the air conditioner to dry the inside; if not, we wipe it with a towel or handkerchief.

Our faith likewise requires something to wipe away the fog. The first step is preventive: keeping the glass from clouding in the first place. Spiritually, this means reading and learning the Bible. Beyond that, it means continually praising God, faithfully attending worship, treasuring prayer, and cherishing gatherings of believers. These practices lessen the fog on our spiritual vision, and even when it does appear, it can quickly be cleared away.

Our hope is that all of us will be transformed to be like Christ, that salvation will be brought to completion, and that this world itself will be renewed into perfect harmony. This is God’s promise, our unfailing and unshakable hope.